

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
Public Forum
Capital Plaza Hotel
May 3, 2007

Council Members Present: Brian Wekamp, Beverly Kaskadden, Debbi Head, Ceil Callahan, Jim Sucharski, Donna Borgmeyer, Clay Berry, Phyllis Lovett, John Wunder, Lawrence Luck

RSB Staff Present: Jennifer Fry – Rehabilitation Assistant, Julie Bruder – Rehabilitation Teacher, Katherine Schroeder – Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Jim Brinkmann – District Supervisor, Mike Merrick – Policy Development Coordinator, Mark Laird – Assistant Deputy Director, Mike Fester – Deputy Director

Members of the Public: Karl Hirsch, Denny Huff, Mary Ann Wunder

There were no issues or concerns brought forward by the public.

Mike Fester said that RSB is going to have a meeting to discuss issues surrounding blind and visually impaired so that everyone is on the same page and knows what is available to blind and visually impaired consumers.

There was discussion about how to reach individuals who are eligible for RSB services who may think that because they are not blind they would not qualify for the services that RSB has to offer. Some suggestions of getting the word of services out were radio and television ads, visits to Senior Services Centers and whether or not it would be possible to include fliers to individuals who checked the blind/visually impaired box on tax returns. Jim Sucharski discussed how the Missouri School for the Blind is going to conduct partially sighted surveys which may also identify individuals who would be eligible for services but are not receiving them. Jim Sucharski said that currently Missouri School for the Blind's APH numbers are the highest since 1964 at 1,178 children.

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

May 4, 2007

Jefferson City, MO

Council Members Present: Lawrence Luck, Brian Wekamp, Jim Sucharski, Ceil Callahan, Donna Borgmeyer, Beverly Kaskadden, Debbi Head, John Wunder, Clay Berry, Phyllis Lovett, Kim Gerlt

Absent: Ruby Polk, James Pelfrey, Russ McCampbell, Stan Grimsley, Mary Kay Savage,

RSB Staff Present: Mike Fester, Mark Laird, Mike Merrick, Jim Brinkmann

Minutes – No comments on the minutes.

Committee Reports – None

Jefferson City District Office:

Jim Brinkmann, District Supervisor, gave a presentation of the Jefferson City District Office and said there are 26 counties in Central Missouri that the Jefferson City office serves. The office consists of 2 Rehabilitation Counselors, 3 Rehabilitation Teachers, 1 Children Specialist, 1 Orientation & Mobility Specialist, 2 Rehabilitation Assistants and 1 Office Manager. Last year the Jefferson City office had 42 competitive employment closures, this year the district projected 40 closures, currently as of April 30, there are 38 closures and 18 in status 22 who are employed and are trying employment to see if it is successful. Last year the older blind services program closed 242 cases, there are already 130 cases closed this year and 230 people are in current active status. Independent living 18 closed cases and this year 10 have closed successful. Office currently has 402 active cases across all cases loads.

Director's Report:

Mike Fester, Deputy Director, gave the Directors report. Mike said Jim Brinkmann has taken on making the FAMIS system, used by the Family Support Division, accessible for the blind and visually impaired. The system is up and running and there are 2 consumers who are testing the system, if it works out then it will go state wide. FSD is going to have another meeting in May with all FSD managers and it will be brought to their attention that the FAMIS system is now accessible to the blind and visually impaired which means there could be huge employment opportunities for consumers.

Transportation – There has been discussion about using 1-10 dollars to give grants to providers who are already providing transportation allowing them to subsidize transportation. This would be a process where information is sent out and then providers can request the grants on a case by case basis. This would be for entities that already

provide transportation to groups of people who are blind or visually impaired. This will only cover transportation to work or for job seeking.

Legislative Session – Budget will be done next week. RSB is in great shape and is going to receiving authority to maximize OBS and VR federal grants which means about one million dollars in additional funds. RSB is also getting the authority to spend social security reimbursement funds which will be used for the electronic case management system. RSB had to ask Feds for an extension on spending the social security funds because they are only available for 2 years and the electronic case management system won't be ready in the 2 year time frame. Also, Senate Bill 16 will require vision screenings for kids entering kindergarten which will take up to \$99,000 from the BEST fund.

RSA – RSA has rolled out a new monitoring process for states. Missouri had a monitoring review a couple of years ago and the new process has only been done to the first few states. This is a monitoring\performance review/get to know you. RSA sends 5 to 6 people out and they spend a couple of weeks, not necessarily all at one time with the agency. Missouri will be in next round which will be announced in September to be reviewed next year. RSA will give the monitoring information a couple months in advance so RSB will know what to expect. RSA has also developed a new database where you can compare just about any information with other states. Next week Mike Fester will send an email to everyone with the RSA database so that you can build your own query of information that you want to see. This information is on their website and anyone can access it.

Forum – There will be a meeting this summer with Dr. Sucharski where different agencies providing services to the blind can all come together to discuss the different services available and how to best serve consumers. Please send anyone name who is interested in attending to Mike Merrick. RSB will work with Dr Sucharski to decide the meeting location and information for meeting. It's time that all groups sit down and gather data where everyone is working together. Initial meeting will be for a couple of days.

Major Consumer Groups – There was discussion of when the major consumer groups will meet with RSB. I was suggested that the meeting be held on the Thursday before the next SRC meeting. Council members suggested that an item that for discussion at that meeting be appointment status of SRC members.

Employment Closures – At the end of March 31, half through the fiscal year RSB had 162 employment closures. Target at beginning of fiscal year is 259. Last year at the same time there were only 83 closures. RSB has doubled their efforts this fiscal year which is an indication of overall quality of service improvement.

Randolph Sheppard's Program – RSB has sent out an RFP for a consultant to review the Randolph Sheppard's Program. RSB has received more complaints from blind vendors this year. Mike Fester met with blind vendors throughout the state and took lots of notes

of their individual issues. The RFP just closed on Monday with only 2 bids. Director of VR agencies in Tennessee has with expertise in Randolph Sheppard's and said he would be candid in the review. RSB will also develop a strategic plan for the Randolph Sheppard's program so that future progress will also be made.

Appointment Status:

There has been no change in the status of SRC member's appointments. All council's are having the same problem with appointment status. There was discussion of having major consumer groups contacting the Governor's office showing support of the appointment of SRC members.

Blindness Skills Specialist:

There is current legislation to hire one new blindness skills specialist with \$80,000 being given to position. There was criticism in the past after money was allocated for the position that the specialists aren't hired in a timely fashion and therefore the impression was given that the state didn't really need the additional funding and risked losing the funding in the next budget year. There was discussion of how there aren't many individuals with the qualifications to serve as a Blindness Skills Specialist and how the State of Missouri needs more certified individuals.

Electronic Case Management:

RSB completed their research in March for the electronic case management. Keith Roderick is project manager for the electronic case management. Keith completed a draft for contract proposal which has to go through the process at OA and Purchasing. RSB is looking at identifying bidders for the system around November with the hopes that the contract will be awarded in February. RSB has no control over bidding process. There are 2 commercial entities that have developed specific Vocational Rehabilitation systems for other state agencies already. Amount to get system up and going is about one million to 1.2 million dollars and then there will be annual maintenance fees.

Survey Trend Data:

Data from the surveys conducted from 1996 to 2006 were compared to find a trend data. The results of the surveys were discussed. The first quarter surveys will be tabulated and sent to counsel at the end of June.

Post Employment:

RSB currently has no limit of expenditures for Services needed after a case is closed. RSB is going to add a limit at \$5,000 for post employment that will include services and equipment to post employment. If the amount exceeds \$5,000 then a new case will have to be opened. This will have no affect consumers. A motion was made by Debbi Head to support RSB's post employment policy change and was seconded by Lawrence Luck, motion passed unanimously.

Children's Vision Summit:

The Children's Vision Summit was held in April and RSB was a major financial sponsor, where as in the past it was sponsored by left over DESE funds. The Summit had 268

people registered and attendance was around 250 to 260 with 19 presentations over a 2 days period. Sponsors were Missouri Council for the Blind who paid for breakfast, Alphapointe paid for lunch the first day, and the National Federal of the Blind sponsored Ruby Riles attendance. The performance of actual seminar was fantastic. The hotel, Capital Plaza, did an outstanding job supporting the Summit. The attendee's consisted of 1/3 teachers, 1/3 individuals with interest in special education and 1/3 parents.

AAR will be held Monday and Tuesday October 9, 2007 at Ramada Inn – professional organization.

Transition Program/Study:

RSA emphasized the transition program as a priority for transition services. In past RSB piggybacked to cooperative work program, which gives individual who are in the transition process an experience at work. RSB is looking at significant issues in the transition process. Guidance in transition are things that will allow a person to be successful in post school activities but not limiting what the transition is to, ex work, a vocation or college. Jim Brinkmann and a committee are gathering information and will present it to the District Supervisors at their meeting in May.

State Plan:

Planning Committee met several times on this plan. Committee made a motion for Council to accept the plan as it was given to council. A brief overview of the state plan was discussed. Motion is that plan is accepted with recommendations made today and that the Council discuss supportive employment in it's totality at a later date. Jim Sucharski moved, Clay Berry seconded, motion passed. RSB should evaluate current supportive employment guidelines and review training and policies with staff. RSB review policies and training related to low incidence strategies, including supportive employment, etc. Jim Sucharski moved, clay berry seconded, motion approved.

A discussion of supportive employment should be added to the agenda at the next SRC meeting.

Strategic Plan:

Mike Fester has been working on this and will need to present at a later time.

Elections:

Annual elections were held. Jim Sucharski made a motion for Lawrence Luck to continue serving as Chair, the motion was seconded by Brian Wekamp and Debbi Head, motion passed unanimously. Debbi Head was nominated for Vice-Chair by John Wunder, motion passed unanimously. Secretary/Treasure – John Wunder nominated Clay Berry for this position and the motion was passed unanimously. Brian Wekamp and Beverly Kaskadden were nominated for First and Second Executive Board Members and the motion passed unanimously.

Other Business:

Missouri School for the Blind invited all schools in the region with blind students to attend their prom. There were about 7 students in surrounding area who attended.

Braille challenge – students from Kansas and Illinois came to participate. School for the Blind had a student who placed 4th in the nation.

Virtual High School – State is working on initiating the virtual high school and Missouri School for the Blind will be able to participate in this with minimal costs which will expand their curriculum at minimal costs.

Power Up Conference – This conference was very well attended and the workshops were good with a nice expo. Final keynote speaker was Team Hoyt, which is a father/son team who runs triathlons/marathons, the speech was very moving and inspirational.

Meeting Locations:

February 7 & 8, 2008 – Kansas City

May 1 & 2, 2008 – Jefferson City

Items for next meeting agenda:

Strategic Plan

Review Low Incidence

Electronic Case Management

Surveys

Discussion of Summit

Discussion of consumer groups

Supportive Employment